

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 EDINBU 00096 080708Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20

/077 W

-----055218 082134Z /65

R 071407Z APR 78

FM AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1499

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS EDINBURGH 096

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGVO, PINT, UK

SUBJECT: THE GARSCADDEN BY-ELECTION

1. SUMMARY: SCOTLAND'S FIRST BY-ELECTION IN THIS PARLIAMENT TAKES PLACE ON APRIL 13 IN THE GARSCADDEN DISTRICT OF GLASGOW. IT IS VIEWED AS A TEST BETWEEN LABOUR AND THE SCOTTISH NATIONALIST PARTY (SNP) IN A FORMERLY SAFE LABOUR SEAT. THE CAMPAIGN'S MAIN ISSUE HAS BEEN UNEMPLOYMENT, BUT THE ABORTION ISSUE HAS EMERGED AND COULD PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THIS 35-45 PER CENT CATHOLIC CONSTITUENCY. BOTH SNP AND LABOUR HAVE WAGED LACKLUSTER CAMPAIGNS THAT HAVE NOT REALLY TAKEN FIRE, BUT THE CHANCES OF THE OTHER CANDIDATES MUST BE VIEWED AS REMOTE. LOCAL OPINION IS THAT THE RACE IS A TOSS-UP, BUT WE PREDICT A NARROW LABOUR VICTORY. A LABOUR WIN WILL NOT BE AS DAMAGING TO THE SNP AS IF IT HAD OCCURRED EARLIER, BECAUSE THE SNP IS EXPECTED TO DO WELL IN MAY'S REGIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND IN ANOTHER UPCOMING SCOTTISH BY-ELECTION. STILL, A LOSS FOR LABOUR WOULD BE DISASTROUS, EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY HAVE SOME SUCCESS IN LIMITING DAMAGE BY ATTRIBUTING DEFEAT TO THE ABORTION ISSUE. IF LABOUR CAN NOT HOLD GARSCADDEN, NO PLACE IN SCOTLAND IS SAFE FOR THEM. END SUMMARY.

2. SCOTLAND'S FIRST BY-ELECTION IN THE COURSE OF THIS PARLIAMENT

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 EDINBU 00096 080708Z

TAKES PLACE ON APRIL 13 IN THE GARSCADDEN CONSTITUENCY IN GLASGOW. IT WILL BE A TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN LABOUR AND THE SNP AND ITS RESULTS WILL BE CAREFULLY NOTED THROUGHOUT THE UK. THIS URBAN CONSTITUENCY WENT LABOUR IN THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION BY A MAJORITY OF 7,626, BUT IN LAST YEAR'S LOCAL DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTIONS THE SNP TOOK ALL THE SEATS.

3. THE MAIN ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN IS UNEMPLOYMENT. GARSCADDEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS ABOUT 20 PER CENT AND SEVERAL LARGE FIRMS IN THE DISTRICT WERE BELIEVED TO BE CONTEMPLATING MASSIVE LAY-OFFS, ALTHOUGH HMG IS ACTIVELY STEPPING IN TO TRY TO FORESTALL THIS.

4. SNP CANDIDATE KEITH BOVEY CREATED PROBLEMS FOR HIMSELF BY APPEARING TO THREATEN JOBS AT YARROWS SHIPYARDS, A LARGE LOCAL EMPLOYER, BY URGING ITS CONVERSION TO PRODUCTION OF MERCHANT SHIPS RATHER THAN WARSHIPS. YARROWS IS UNSUITABLE FOR PRODUCTION OF MERCHANT VESSELS BECAUSE ITS FACILITIES LIMIT IT TO CONSTRUCTION OF SHIPS IN THE 8000 TONS AND UNDER RANGE. BOVEY, A PACIFIST AND MEMBER OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT (CND) HAS NOT PROVED TO BE A PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNER ALTHOUGH HE IS WELL KNOWN IN THE DISTRICT AS HE WAS THE SNP CANDIDATE IN THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION.

5. ABORTION HAS ALSO BECOME A MAJOR ISSUE. LABOUR CANDIDATE DONALD DEWAR AND THE SNP'S BOVEY HAVE BACKSLIDE ON PREVIOUS STANDS IN FAVOR, WITH BOVEY NOW A SEEMINGLY STRONG CONVERT TO THE "ANTI" VIEW. DEWAR VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE ABORTION BILL IN 1967 WHEN HE WAS LABOUR MP FOR ABERDEEN SOUTH BUT NOW SPEAKS IN TERMS OF "NOT PRECLUDING ABORTION" IN CASES OF RISK TO THE MOTHER OR OF THE POSSIBILITY OF MASSIVE HEALTH PROBLEMS TO THE CHILD. TORY CANDIDATE IAN LAWSON IS STEADFASTLY ANTI-ABORTION AND SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY (SLP) CANDIDATE SHIONA FARELL, A DEVOUT PRACTICING ROMAN CATHOLIC, IS PERSONALLY UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 EDINBU 00096 080708Z

OPPOSED TO ABORTION AND REGRETS ITS INTRUSION INTO THE CAMPAIGN, BELIEVING THAT IT IS A MATTER MORE APPROPRIATELY LEFT TO INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE. THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE UNBORN CHILD (SPUC, WHO PREFER THEIR INITIALS TO BE SPELLED OUT RATHER THAN PRONOUNCED TOGETHER) HAS BEEN ACTIVELY DISTRIBUTING RATHER LURID LITERATURE AND PREACHING IN CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN THE CONSTITUENCY. GLASGOW ARCHBISHOP THOMAS WINNING HAS STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ABORTION ISSUE IN THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE DIOCESE'S WIDELY CIRCULATED NEWSPAPER. THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN READILY PICKED UP BY THE MEDIA WHO HAVE PROBABLY MAGNIFIED IT OUT OF PROPORTION, ALTHOUGH IN A 35-45 PER CENT CATHOLIC CONSTITUENCY LIKE GARSCADDEN, THIS ACTIVE CAMPAIGN ON THE ABORTION ISSUE COULD SERVE TO CUT INTO THE TRADITIONAL LABOUR VOTE.

6. LOCAL OPINION IS THAT THE RACE WILL BE A CLOSE ONE. LABOUR MP JOHN MACKINTOSH, LOTHIAN REGION'S LABOUR CONVENOR PETER WILSON, AND SNP CHAIRMAN WILLIAM WOLFE ALL CONSIDER THE RACE A TOSS-UP, ALTHOUGH BOTH WOLFE AND WILSON BELIEVE THAT THE SNP'S VICE CHAIRMAN MARGO MACDONALD WILL EASILY WIN AN UP-COMING BY-ELECTION IN HAMILTON. OUR BEST GUESS IS THAT LABOUR WILL NARROWLY HOLD THE GARSCADDEN SEAT. THE SNP WILL BE A CLOSE SECOND AND THE CONSERVATIVES WILL SHOW INCREASED STRENGTH. YOUNG AND PERSONABLE

SLP CANDIDATE SHIONA FARRELL (WIFE OF SLP PARTY CHAIRMAN) WILL DO WELL AND DRAW AWAY SOME SNP VOTES.

7. SNP FAILURE TO GAIN THIS SEAT WILL NOT DO AS MUCH HARM TO THEM AS EXPECTED BECAUSE IT WILL SHORTLY BE FOLLOWED BY A BROAD TEST OF STRENGTH IN MAY'S REGIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND BY THE HAMILTON BY-ELECTION, WHICH THE SNP IS EXPECTED TO WIN HANDILY. STRONG SNP SHOWINGS WILL LEAD TO INCREASED TALK ABOUT INDEPENDENCE AND A MORE MILITANT STANCE ON DEVOLUTION. IN GARSCADDEN THE SNP HAVE THEIR CHANCE TO PUT THEIR APPEAL TO THE TEST IN WHAT WAS ONCE A SAFE LABOUR CONSTITUENCY. ALTHOUGH LABOUR WILL ATTEMPT TO LIMIT DAMAGE BY ATTRIBUTING THEIR DEFEAT, IF THEY LOSE, TO THE ABORTION ISSUE, THE FACT REMAINS THAT UNLESS LABOUR CAN HOLD SEATS LIKE GARSCADDEN, THEY WILL FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 EDINBU 00096 080708Z

COLLECT THE MAJORITY OF SCOTTISH SEATS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO A LABOUR MAJORITY AT WESTMINSTER.

DOBBS

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, ELECTIONS, BYELECTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978EDINBU00096
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780153-0157
Format: TEL
From: EDINBURGH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780482/aaaacrmo.tel
Line Count: 140
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 87a4d4b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3044839
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE GARSCADDEN BY-ELECTION
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/87a4d4b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014